



## 2018 Safety & Security Proposal FAQ Sheet

### ***Proposed Safety & Security plan:***

- Increase visible law enforcement and responsiveness in our schools by hiring additional school resource officers
- Address the mental health needs of our students in a proactive, real-time and hands-on fashion by adding mental health counselors at the elementary, junior high and high school levels
- Increase security visibility with new and up-to-date digital internal and external cameras to monitor hallways, classrooms, parking lots, outdoor spectator areas and more
- Install an electronic school visitor identification system for check in and out of our schools which will help immediately identify visitors who pose a potential risk
- Implement a new, secure communications network through an updated phone system allowing for direct access to police with increased reliability and digital emergency messaging

The Sylvania Schools Safety and Security team has determined the above items to be priorities needed for an even stronger safe environment in all 14 of our district buildings. We are cognizant of balancing the need for effective security measures which deter crime, but do not negatively impact the overall learning environment or school experience. This is a general information sheet that is a supplement to the July 23rd, 2018 Board of Education Presentation by Dr. Fineske. We believe it will help to provide answers to many of the common questions we have received thus far from parents and the community.

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### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **What safety measures are already in place in Sylvania Schools?**

The District Safety and Security Committee has been in place for the past 8 years. Members include District building administrators, departmental directors, teachers, local law enforcement, fire and first responders, and parents. Numerous safety measures have been put in place over the last few years including: comprehensive building safety plans (shared with the state, local police & fire, and all administrators), ALiCE training (national program that trains Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate in emergency situations), “Go Buckets” with emergency supplies in all classrooms and offices, new signage for school & community events to explain safety procedures, de-escalation training, Incident Command Post training for Administrators (NIMS), replacement of glass with Lexan, which is highly impact resistant and shatterproof, secondary door restraints, additional cameras, and security vestibules in each building.

#### **Why is the district looking to put a levy on the ballot to fund this initiative and not looking to use current budgeted dollars received from prior levies?**

The money that the district receives from previous levies is needed and allocated for educational initiatives to maintain the high level of student education and offerings we provide. When the Sylvania Community approved prior levies, the money from those levies was earmarked for the items the community agreed were a priority for the district at the time. Although we were able to complete some safety and security work through prior permanent improvement levy funds, we understand the need for additional security, in light of recent tragic events and the severe and unthinkable consequences of an act of school violence. A new aspect of this program is the addition of personnel that we believe will be very impactful. This set of recommendations is a new initiative with a cost that, if done all at once would not be able to be funded by the current budget, or if implemented as money becomes available, would take years to complete.



### **What is the “Sylvania Amendment” to House Bill 24 and how did it get its name?**

This amendment was presented to the House Ways and Means Committee by Senator Randy Gardner in March 2018. It was then voted upon in the following weeks by the Ohio House and Senate as an amendment to House Bill 24 that would allow more flexibility for public school districts to be able to request funds through a special levy for safety and security efforts. The amendment specifically addressed the ability to request funds for personnel to help support students such as additional school resource officers and mental health counselors. Prior to the amendment funds could only be used for permanent improvement safety and security devices or structural improvements to school buildings. The efforts stemmed from a meeting that took place in February after the tragedy in Parkland, Florida where Senator Gardner met with a team of board members, administrators, teachers and students at Southview High School to hear what concerns were the most prevalent in local schools and his request of hearing from educators and students on what they need the most. Senator Gardner, as part of recognition and thanks decided to call this change to legislation, the “Sylvania Amendment.” This provision also requires that funds allocated for the purposes described are used for the purposes described and not allocated for some other purpose.

### **Have grants been considered to help cover this cost?**

Research has been done to search for grants that cover most of the items listed in our plan in various ways since the Safety and Security Committee has been in existence. We have been fortunate to receive some grant money in the past to help with some of our initial security cameras and with Motorola Radios for our “safe rooms” at our schools. Unfortunately, we have also been denied grant monies in the past, even when partnering with other districts, at times due to the socio-economic makeup of our district. As the district has researched grants at the federal level, we have found that money is not directly available to school districts themselves. It is only disbursed through local governmental agencies such as a city council or township/village trustee board. In these federal grants, most have restrictions and give power to the receiving entity on how much money is distributed and to whom they decide necessary. The SVPP grant which has gained popularity this past year may be available for application by close to 70,000 governmental agencies, municipalities or other units, plus each of the 50 states can apply for the grant as well. The SVPP grants awarded are likely to total approximately 60 in all and that is only if the funds allocated for the grants remain available. We have considered this grant but many of the items in our plan are disqualified with the restrictions currently in place. The district is committed to search and apply for any grants available, when possible, to supplement the work of the committee as much as we can moving forward.

### **Will firearms be allowed in the schools for any reason?**

No. The only firearm allowed in a Sylvania School is one that is in the possession of a law enforcement officer.



**What specific role will the Mental Health Specialists have? How are they different than school counselors?**

**School Guidance Counselors** (Master of Arts Degree in Counselor Education) assist students' growth and adjustment with academic, career, personal, and social issues through individual and group counseling, testing, guidance and advising, and consultation with parents, teachers, and other professionals to help students meet challenges they face in today's schools and society.

**Mental Health Counselors** (Master of Arts Degree in Counselor Education with Clinical Mental Health Counseling concentration) work with students to prevent and treat emotional and mental disorders and to promote mental health. They are trained in a variety of therapeutic techniques used to address issues including depression, anxiety, addiction and substance abuse, suicidal impulses, stress, problems with self-esteem, and grief. MHCs can work closely with families and school staff including counselors and teachers to address mental health needs of identified students.

Mental Health Counselors will work with students identified through various means (IAT, parent , counselor and school staff referrals) This is not a stand alone role, but an added resource to each school's team to enhance the ability to address all needs of the student.

**What is a "Resource Officer"? What does SRO stand for? Will they be fully funded by the district or are the police departments sharing the cost?**

SRO stands for School Resource Officer. Resource Officers are already in our 2 high schools, and the recommendation is that each of the 3 junior high schools have a full-time resource officer. The officers are a visible deterrent to crime in the schools. Their constant presence builds camaraderie with students and allows for positive interactions between students and the police. The resource officers assist the administration when necessary with discipline issues. They also serve the critical role of being a ready responder if the need arises for police protection on school grounds. Having dedicated officers at our junior highs will also allow additional services for local officers in the community at the elementary level as well.

**Do any of these proposals stop weapons from entering the buildings? Are metal detectors being considered?**

The proposed changes address the needs for Sylvania determined by research conducted by our Safety and Security Team along with survey results collected from those involved in all Safety and Security projects. At this time, the district is not considering metal detectors. The challenges outweigh the benefits at this time when it comes to the management of students entering and exiting the building and to hire the additional staff to manage and run these devices on a daily basis in our 12 schools and 2 support facilities. These would not stop all weapons, and it is not the intention of the district to go to any extreme measures that would alter the learning atmosphere for the students. The changes we are discussing are intended to identify risks and prevent them from escalating as well as addressing issues which may occur onsite.



### **How is a phone system part of Safety & Security?**

The district phone system will most likely be used as the first mode of contact with police/fire in an emergency situation. Our current phone system is 20 years old and is no longer supported. The system is becoming unreliable and if it has an issue it then becomes necessary to purchase replacement parts from second hand parts suppliers. The new system will be a Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) which is much more reliable, digital and supported. The phone system will be connected to our computers and allow full communication to local law enforcement.

### **Will the proposed items cause the schools to become a more stressful learning environment?**

We believe that none of the proposed recommendations affect the classroom environment in a negative fashion. With the plan we are proposing, we are striving to be a safe environment where security measures are effective and deter crime, but do not impact the overall learning environment or school experience. The additional staff proposed in our plan will be in place to work with our students in a proactive manner to help them as much as possible so that learning can be their top priority.